

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MINUTES
March 26, 2009

Chair Knox-White called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL** – Roll was called and the following recorded.

Members Present:

John Knox White
Michael Krueger
Jean Lee
Kathy Moehring
Eric Schatmeier

Members Absent:

Robert McFarland
Srikant Subramaniam

Staff Present:

Obaid Khan, Supervising Civil Engineer
Barry Bergman, Transportation Coordinator
Gail Payne, Transportation Coordinator

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. December 10, 2008

<p><i>Commissioner Schatmeier</i> moved approval of the minutes for the December 10, 2008, meeting and minutes as presented. <i>Commissioner Moehring</i> seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. (Absent: <i>Commissioner McFarland, Commissioner Subramaniam</i>).</p>
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- b. February 25, 2009

Commissioner Lee noted that she was identified on page 1 as being absent, and that she had attended this meeting.

Chair Knox White noted that page 2 the minutes reflected that she and *Commissioner Schatmeier* arrived at 7:45 p.m.

Chair Knox White noted that on page 6, the minutes read, “Regarding the school concerns, he was aware of dangerous maneuvers by parents dropping children off at this and other school locations.” He noted that previous speakers had made comments regarding these safety issues, and that he had not made the original observation about parents and driving automobiles.

Commissioner Krueger moved approval of the minutes for the February 25, 2009, meeting and minutes as amended. *Commissioner Moehring* seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. (Absent: *Commissioner McFarland, Commissioner Subramaniam*).

3. AGENDA CHANGES

Chair Knox White recommended that Item 7A be moved to the front of the agenda because of the number of public speakers; Item 7B would be heard next, followed by Items 6A and 6B.

4. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS

a. Bicycle Plan Update Group

Chair Knox White noted this could be discussed during Item 7B.

b. Alameda Point Advisory Task Force

Chair Knox White noted this group had not met.

c. Transit Plan Subcommittee

There was no report.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

There were none.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7A. Review of Draft Estuary Crossing Feasibility Report

Staff Payne presented the staff report, and detailed the background and scope of this draft report. She presented a PowerPoint presentation, and noted that staff sought the feedback of staff and the community. She noted that the safety bullet point encompassed a lifeline issue, in cases of natural disaster, stating that the crossing could contribute to any kind of evacuation or emergency needs that Alameda might have. The following bullet points were functionality, financial impact (operations/maintenance costs), engineering, neighborhood development, and environmental impacts.

Staff Payne noted that 17 different alternatives were examined in three different categories: 1) Existing Service Improvements, Bicycle/Shuttle Capacity Improvements, Ferry Service Improvement, Traffic and Transit Management, and Minor Modifications to the Existing Tube; 2) Water Crossings, Water Shuttle/Taxi, Bus/Bicycle/Barge, and User Propelled Boats; 3) Bridge/Tunnel/Elevated Structure, Transporter Bridge, Aerial Tramway, Bicycle/Pedestrian Tube, Modification of Existing Tube, and Underground Extension to BART. She noted that the movable bicycle/pedestrian drawbridge best met the criteria for a high priority project. She noted that the expected cost was \$55 million, although that estimate could not be solidified because of the economic conditions. She added that it was more likely that a range of costs would be identified. She noted that the drawbridge would need an operator on-site 24 hours/7 days a week,

as would the water taxi.

Staff Payne noted that the City of Oakland and AC Transit were key stakeholders.

Commissioner Schatmeier inquired about the alternatives, and believed there may have been more alternatives in the original draft. He inquired whether a bridge similar to the Bay Farm Bridge would be feasible for the Estuary, and believed it would be less complex.

Staff Khan replied that was viable, depending upon the horizontal span that would be allowed. He noted that the Coast Guard requested 600 feet of water clearance, and that more analysis should be done.

Commissioner Schatmeier noted that the existing ferries were labor-intensive, and recalled the previous transit study, which cited the Vancouver Sea Bus. He noted that the passengers embarked on one side, and disembarked on the other side; the Sea Bus went back and forth like a shuttle, piloted by one person.

Staff Payne noted that a water taxi/shuttle would be the closest to what the Commission requested.

Commissioner Schatmeier cited the Smart system in Marin County, which was being rebuilt to separate the bicycles from the trains in the tunnel. *Staff Payne* noted that staff looked at a new bicycle/pedestrian tube, which did not go very far because of the same unpleasant atmosphere for bicycles and pedestrians. He noted that security, monitoring cameras and police would be necessary, which would not be needed for above-ground passage.

Commissioner Krueger inquired whether a glass separation within the tube was considered, in order to take care of keeping the pedestrians and bicyclists away from the pollution. *Staff Payne* noted that it was considered, and was not considered to be feasible for security reasons.

Staff Khan added that the exhaust system for the enclosure would have been cost-prohibitive.

Commissioner Krueger inquired about the placeholder for the cost of the bicycle/pedestrian bridge with transit lanes. *Staff Payne* replied that it would probably be in the area of \$150 million.

Commissioner Krueger inquired whether it would be possible to consolidate drawbridge operations with a remote control and cameras. *Staff Khan* noted that there may be regulations that required a human operator to be on the premises.

Commissioner Krueger noted that if this option was legal, it could reduce the costs.

Staff Payne noted that it would be beneficial to have an operator on-site at all times, in order to act as a security presence as well.

Commissioner Krueger recalled the concern about transit crossing the railroad mainline, and inquired whether any rail upgrade plans were being considered as part of the high-speed rail project.

Staff Payne noted that the Union Pacific representative did not mention anything about the high-speed rail running through there in the future. However, he noted that freight and passenger operations were expected to increase, and that the trains were expected to get longer.

Chair Knox White noted that page 31 stated that the “financial impact long-term was an annual operation over a 30-year horizon.” He inquired whether the costs were annual, or broken down over 30 years. *Staff Payne* replied that the cost was on an annual basis.

Staff Khan added that the preliminary errors in the cost section would be cleaned up for inclusion in the next version.

Chair Knox White inquired why one large barge was able to do the 15-minute service, but a small, much faster water taxi would need two.

Chair Knox White inquired why the fixed bridge came in \$15 million lower than the preferred option of the movable bridge, and why the movable bridge was preferred when it was more expensive. *Staff Payne* noted that item would be corrected.

Chair Knox White inquired whether the drawbridge would generally be open during the peak commute hours. *Staff Khan* noted that kind of operational detail had not been addressed at this time.

Chair Knox White inquired what the probability was of securing funding for a \$55 million movable bridge over the estuary for bikes and pedestrians. *Staff Khan* noted that staff hoped that stimulus money could become available in the future. *Staff Payne* believed that this may be suitable under the green project infrastructure category.

A discussion of stimulus funding allocation ensued. *Staff Khan* noted that staff had looked into the possibility of making transit options part of the project. This could potentially provide access to more funding.

Chair Knox White noted that staff’s recommendation was that the Transportation Commission recommend acceptance by the City Council, although the Transportation Commission did not have a final document yet. He inquired whether the Transportation Commission’s comments would be passed to the City Council.

Staff Khan replied that the Commission could provide its comments to staff, such as cost estimates and other items that have not been finalized. Staff would then return to the Transportation Commission for final recommendation.

Staff Payne noted that she took the Draft Pedestrian Plan and the Estuary Crossing Study to all the commissions and board in the spring. She noted that the Draft Pedestrian Plan was not presented to the Transportation Commission because it had been delayed due to the Transportation Element.

Commissioner Krueger inquired about the cost difference between the bicycle/pedestrian bridge and the bicycle/pedestrian/transit bridge, and that \$150 million was the best estimate. He inquired whether \$55 million was still the best estimate on the bicycle/pedestrian movable bridge.

Staff Payne replied that it was difficult to estimate the cost of both alternatives, but that the differential was probably the same; there was also the problem of the 600-foot horizontal clearance.

In response to an inquiry by *Chair Knox White* about the streetcar option, *Staff Payne* replied that the Jack London District did not favor that option at all.

Open public hearing.

Sandy Threlfall, Executive Director, Waterfront Action, noted that their mission was to get people to the Oakland and Alameda waterfronts. She believed that the stimulus package contained some money for rail separation, which would be a boon to bicyclists and pedestrians. With respect to Jack London Square, she believed that they were being very obstructionist, and that they did not like community involvement in any of their decisions. Under mitigation, they were required to provide a shuttle from the Square to the BART station and uptown; that has not been enforced. She invited suggestions, and liked the idea of the BART extension. She noted that their Square was public trust land, which did not entitle them to right of first refusal, although the Oakland City Council did not share that view. She noted that Waterfront Action would be happy to work with the City of Alameda. She noted that the water shuttle had the most flexibility, and that they supported it.

Jon Spangler, 1037 San Antonio Avenue, was concerned that the bridges other than the Miller-Sweeney had not been analyzed in the Crossing Feasibility Study, and that he did not believe the study was ready for “prime time.” He believed the Transit Option and Lifeline Option should be included and pressed for, if at all possible, in order to make this a more marketable project. He believed that green, renewable propulsion systems for the water taxi were very important; he did not see that in the feasibility study. He believed that while the water shuttle had aesthetic value, it did not work as a lifeline for getting a large amount of emergency supplies and vehicles across the Estuary quickly.

Lucy Gigli, President, Bike Alameda, expressed concern about the lack of information in the study. She noted that some numbers in the report were much higher than they were as presented at the October 2008 meeting. She did not believe there was enough information to grasp what needs to be done to go forward. She noted that in some cases, the cost estimates were doubled to

quadrupled for the water shuttle. She would like to see examples of the operational costs for the water shuttle with the Delta, Portland and Vancouver water shuttles. She noted that the original bid for the feasibility study, discussing long-term, medium and short-term options, did not include more specific operating costs, correlated with the likelihood of the costs being attained. She would like more details of the options that were canceled, such as the Plexiglas barrier.

Jim Strehlow noted that there was discussion of the Coast Guard vessel heights with respect to the needed height of the bridge, so that it would not have to be opened.

Jeff Cambra, Bike Alameda, Board Member; Chair of Estuary Crossing Subcommittee, thanked staff for getting the report out so quickly. He suggested a public comment period to answer some of the questions and bring it back once it is more refined. He does not believe there is any thought by the Council that Alameda would be funding 100 percent of this project.

Close public hearing.

Commissioner Moehring and believed it should be a transit-pedestrian bike bridge. She noted that would reduce the cost per use, and opened it up for other funding. She agreed with Jon Spangler's comments about including a lifeline to accommodate emergency vehicles.

Commissioner Lee also shared the concern about the claustrophobic feel of the Tube, and that she had never walked or biked through there; she noted that would make her afraid. She agreed with *Commissioner Moehring* about the bike cost, and that if it could be affordable, she would agree with that. She liked the speaker's comments about additional uses for the water shuttle.

Chair Knox White noted that as important as the bike-pedestrian link was, adding the transit was the factor that justified the enormous cost. He noted that the constrained capacity on the West End of Alameda indicated that adding transit capacity would be needed, and that it would be the key for future mobility in the city. He noted that adding future vehicle capacity would add to the congestion in Oakland and near I-880. He was surprised that transit did not seem to add anything according to the report, which was counter to what he expected to see. He would like to see the land use argument articulated. He believed the vision of adding transit was important for getting any funding for it, and would like to see the scope expanded.

Commissioner Schatmeier did not want to see transit money spent on this project, and believed the Tube had some of the best, highest frequency transit service in the East Bay. He noted that there were other ways of alleviating the congestion short of building another structure across the Estuary to carry buses. He recalled the discussion of a bus bridge to carry buses, which did not go very far. He believed the project should fall under bike-pedestrian access, and did not believe transit added to its attractiveness. He complimented staff on the quality of the report, and agreed with Jon Spangler that it was not yet ready for prime time.

Chair Knox White believed there was a problem with the estimated ridership numbers, and did not know where the 170% increase in ridership came from; a 200% increase followed that, which was a 20% growth over the estimated growth. He noted that he was a supporter of a feasibility

study, and that this was a very important issue. He believed there could be a benefit during commute hours, and that during off-hours, traffic in the Tube generally flowed well. He believed that the addition of transit during peak hours during a transit outage could be helpful.

Staff Khan noted that staff could bring the study back to the Transportation Commission.

Chair Knox White believed the feasibility study showed that building a bike-pedestrian bridge would not be feasible any time soon. He believed it was fine to discuss stimulus money, but did not believe that \$55-150 million for a bridge would be realistic. He understood the community was very supportive of it, and added that this would be one of the largest movable bridges in the world, which was a big red flag for the estimated costs. He noted that City Council did not support it prior to the ACTIA meeting, and did not believe it was a good use of regional money.

Staff Khan noted that staff would fix the numbers and re-examine some of the exemptions. Staff would also enhance the existing study, although going into more detail for transit would not be revisited.

Chair Knox White would like the study to remove the improved traffic and transit management section, which did not address bike-pedestrian issues. He noted that it was a fine project, and believed there was support for the water shuttle.

Commissioner Schatmeier asked that the transit benefits be quantified in making the case for having this project include transit.

Staff Khan noted that *Commissioner Schatmeier* made a good point with respect to the project, and that transit would not improve solely with the bridge. He noted that the connectivity on the other side of the Estuary was important.

Chair Knox White would like to entertain a motion that removed the improved traffic and transit management from the existing service improvements. He inquired whether \$7 million to modify the Tubes was a good estimate.

Chair Knox White suggested recommending not accepting this report, because the findings indicate that the project is not feasible at this time, and that the recommendation say that a study not be paid for and performed on a transit bridge option until such time as the regional plans were in place.

Commissioner Moehring believed that in the short term, a viable option would be needed for bikes and pedestrians, but that it would be short-sighted not to look further down the road. She noted that AC Transit and Jack London Square may not be amenable at this time, but that discussions should have started on this five years ago.

Chair Knox White agreed that a long-term vision was important, but that he didn't believe it made sense to move forward on this while there is currently no hope of getting it funded. He

suggested that the City should get a commitment from the Coast Guard regarding whether it would be willing to keep the bridge open during commute hours.

Staff Payne suggested that the bike-pedestrian needs should be decoupled from the transit needs. She believed that a bike-pedestrian bridge would be the best alternative, although it was expensive. She suggested that a tube with expanded transit capacity might be worth exploring.

Chair Knox White suggested that the water shuttle be the primary area to be studied, and recommend to City Council to direct staff to start the planning process, with the Transportation Commission as the body, to study transit connections on the West End. He did not believe it was a good idea to spend \$1 million on a consultant. He stated that the cost of the bridge makes this project infeasible. He suggested that the transit plan update would be the place to look at a transit crossing.

Staff Khan noted that the cost was a concern to staff all along, but the bridge was identified by the public as the best solution.

Commissioner Krueger moved to recommend not adopting the feasibility study on the basis that the cost estimates made it infeasible. The movable bridge has not been shown to be feasible, given that the Coast Guard has not taken a position on whether it could remain closed in a usable condition during commute hours. The further recommendation was that the long-range transit plan should start as soon as possible, and that any crossing should include bike and pedestrian access. *Commissioner Lee* seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. Absent: *Commissioner McFarland* and *Commissioner Subramaniam*.

7B. Review of Draft Policies for Bicycle Plan Update

Staff Bergman summarized the staff report, and detailed the background of this item. He noted that the new policies included the draft vision statement and the highlighted sections of the policies, which were more specific than the policies approved as part of the Transportation Element. He noted that a public workshop would be held the following day at Alameda High School.

Open public hearing.

Jon Spangler believed that most of the policies belonged in the Transportation Master Plan. He noted that page 2 (4.1.2.b) should be in the TMP because of the multimodal measuring/monitoring system that was elsewhere on the agenda. He noted that on page 5 (4.3.3.a), Bicycle Master Plan should be capitalized. Page 6 (4.3.3.m.). Require showers and changing rooms at strategic locations for future new developments, and major new developments to make it parallel with the previous policy about new developments and major redevelopments. He suggested that the policy on 4.2.2.h also belonged in the TMP if pedestrians and people with disabilities were included, to ensure that they were accommodated. He appreciated the new policies.

Close public hearing.

Chair Knox White noted that this would be a major update, and that it was due.

No action was taken.

Commissioner Lee left the meeting at 9:30.

6. OLD BUSINESS

6A. Development of Multimodal Thresholds of Significance and Methods for Resolving Conflicts on Street Segments with Multiple Modal Preferences. AND

6B. Alternative Proposal Regarding Multimodal Thresholds of Significance and Methods for Resolving Conflicts Between Preferred Modes

Staff Bergman presented the staff report, and recapped the background of this item. He described the letter grades for each mode, which would move forward as more detailed analysis was complete. He noted that staff attempted to address several comments made by the Commission at the February meeting, including the request that staff prepare policies or principles underlying the methodology presented for resolving the conflicts. This was included in the staff report.

Staff recommended that the City's consultant, Dowling Associates, be directed to complete its analysis with the City's traffic model so that the two alternative methods for identifying modal priorities could be evaluated. This information could then be brought back to the TC for consideration. A sample of segments in the street network were selected, based on locations where there were anticipated to be conflicts between modes, and some of the more difficult situations to resolve. He noted that the adoption of thresholds and procedures for identifying preferred transportation modes could have significant implications for the need to conduct environmental analysis for projects and the need to mitigate impacts.

Open public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Close public hearing.

Chair Knox White would like to have two different discussions regarding the thresholds, as well as the two proposals. He requested information on why LOS-D was acceptable. He wanted discussion on policy, and what kind of community they wanted to live in.

Staff Khan noted that all the recommendations would be brought forward in April.

Chair Knox White did not believe the recommended level of service of D made sense for Alameda, and would be surprised if the Planning Board, Transportation Commission or the City Council would accept this position.

Commissioner Moehring indicated that she believed the acceptable threshold depended on the location.

Chair Knox White stated that the TC needed to first consider what LOS was desirable. After that, methods for resolving conflicts could be considered.

Nathan Landau, AC Transit, believed that the desired LOS should be identified compared to the current LOS. He noted that AC Transit could not change street routes easily.

Andrew Thomas, City of Alameda Supervising Planner, noted that he was responsible for pulling environmental documents together. He agreed with *Chair Knox White* that defining what was acceptable to the community was not a technical decision.

Chair Knox White suggested looking at one auto LOS method based on segments, not intersections, which reflected the direction the state is beginning to move.

Commissioner Schatmeier moved to continue the meeting until 10:30 p.m. *Commissioner Moering* seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. (Absent: *Commissioner Lee*, *Commissioner McFarland* and *Commissioner Subramaniam*).

Commissioner Moehring believed that pedestrian and bicycle LOS should not be less than a B.

Staff Thomas stated that Oakland adopted LOS D except in downtown Oakland to account for differences in location.

Chair Knox White noted that this is similar to what San Jose does, and this may be an option once the results of the analysis are completed.

Commissioner Krueger believed that Mr. Thomas' remarks could be captured in the way the City handles conflicts. He believed that Alameda was attempting something more refined than what Oakland did.

Commissioner Krueger favored the corridor approach, which captured the neighborhood aspect of the plan, and prevented the futility of upgrading intersections to rush people to congestion further up the line.

Staff Khan responded that the corridor analysis would not account for turning traffic, and if there are excessive queues there is a concern about potentially redirecting traffic into residential neighborhoods. He noted that staff supports use of corridor analysis, but not exclusively.

JKW: asked that staff come back and clearly illustrate the importance of intersection analysis

Commissioner Krueger moved to recommend conducting the analysis using LOS B for pedestrians and bicycles; that a decision on auto LOS be postponed until information can be considered regarding the importance of intersection LOS for autos in addition to corridor LOS; and that a decision on transit LOS be postponed until a recommendation can be provided by AC

Transit. *Commissioner Moehring* seconded the motion. The Transportation Commission reserved the right to consider a different analysis based on the upcoming report. Motion passed 4-0. (Absent: *Commissioner Lee, Commissioner McFarland and Commissioner Subramaniam*).

Chair Knox White wished to discuss the staff proposal with respect to prioritization. His concern was that bikes, pedestrians and transit would get much worse before anything was done, mainly using the LOS D.

Commissioner Krueger noted that he did a comparison between the staff proposal and the alternative proposal. They seemed to be in complete agreement on collectors and local streets.

Staff Thomas noted that a possible scenario for applying these methods would be that a project will be proposed that will generate additional auto traffic on Park Street. The travel speeds will be reduced, and this will cause a significant impact to transit. The proposed mitigation would be to retime the signals, but the tradeoff is that this will increase pedestrian delay. The question becomes if we want to prioritize transit or the pedestrians. The staff proposal allows the acceptance of a lower LOS, while under the alternative proposal it may require the acceptance of a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Staff Khan noted that the analysis from Dowling will determine the impacts and look at the impacts of implementing mitigations to address the impacts.

Staff Khan noted that Mr. Thomas was correct in that discretionary approvals would be considered for large projects. He said that the staff concern is more about small projects, such as changing signal timing requiring an EIR, and noted that a Statement of Overriding Considerations require an EIR.

Staff Bergman noted that under the staff proposal, LOS C might be achievable for both the transit and pedestrian modes, and this would not result in a significant impact. If LOS B is the threshold, this could require a mitigation that would further lower the transit LOS to achieve improved pedestrian LOS.

Chair Knox White noted that the analysis would not account for transportation demand management, so the analysis would be presenting a worst case scenario.

Staff Khan suggested that a hybrid approach might be used.

Commissioner Krueger would not be opposed to seeing a hybrid analysis blending the 2 approaches, but would also like to see how the proposal runs without any changes.

Commissioner Krueger moved to recommend that staff run the analysis with Proposal 6-B as written, but to feel free to create a hybrid proposal as staff sees fit, in order to bring it back to the Transportation Commission. This should include specific intersection examples where possible. *Commissioner Moehring* seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. (Absent: *Commissioners*

McFarland, Subramaniam, and Lee).

8. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Broadway/Jackson Update

Staff Khan noted that there was nothing new to report.

Chair Knox White inquired about the status of this project.

Staff Khan noted that the PSR was under review at CalTrans.

Chair Knox White expressed concern about the horseshoe turn, and inquired whether Oakland was opposed to it .

Staff Khan noted that Caltrans was opposed because of physical constraints that resulted in this alternative exceeding Caltrans standards.

Chair Knox White noted that he had discussed the project with a number of people, and inquired whether it could be brought back. *Staff Khan* replied that it will brought back at the request of Mayor Johnson, and that a separate analysis will be done in the environmental phase.

Estuary Crossing/Feasibility Study

There was no report.

Upcoming development-related traffic studies and plans

Staff Khan noted that the Boatworks project was moving forward, and was in the EIR process. Staff would bring information to the Transportation Commission as it becomes available.

Staff Bergman noted that the WETA meeting would be held on April 16th at 7:30 p.m. The regular meeting would still be held on April 22.

9. ADJOURNMENT: 10:43 p.m.